

# INTEGRITY

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*Scripture*

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## EDITORIAL



E Catholics—or at least a good many of us—have rather an odd attitude toward the Bible. In our argumentation and agitation against Protestants, who regard it as the *sole* rule of faith, we have come to regard it almost as no rule of faith. Not that the official Church concurs with us, for the modern Popes have been outspoken in urging the faithful to read the Bible. But, in practice, how many of us have responded to this urging? Does not our attitude in defending ourselves from the Jehovah's Witnesses and other Bible-reading sects almost verge on repudiation of the Scriptures? These sects have taken and treasured an important part of Christian heritage. Mistakenly they have viewed it as the whole heritage; in this sense they have overvalued the treasure of the Bible. But it is our heritage too; has not our response too often been to undervalue it? To feel rather embarrassed at the Scripture posters in subway stations (indeed to be more scandalized by them than by the ads for Exquisite Form and Four Roses)? To feel that somehow it's rather Protestant to be caught reading the Bible?

While "it is not fitting that the bread for the children be given to the dogs," the children themselves sometimes throw the bread away. Apparently that is what many Christians have done with the Bible.

However, it would be as mistaken for Catholics to *start* reading the Bible just because the Protestants do it, as it was for them to *stop* reading the Bible just because the Protestants did it. We read the Scripture, not to get back at the Protestants, but because we recognize it as the Word of God.

However great the error of making the Bible the sole rule of faith may be, more insidious today is the error of the modern secularist who refuses to recognize the inspired character of the Bible while he extolls it highly as great literature and urges that it be taught in the schools along with Shakespeare, Virgil and Dante. The profundity of Job, the touching story of Tobias, the

utter loveliness of the Psalms, make them great literature indeed. But to see them *only* as great literature is to destroy them.

Who is more dangerous: the person who hates Christ, or the one who seems to accept Him, praises Him as the greatest man who ever lived, but refuses to proclaim Him as the Son of God? The secularist who accepts the Bible for its literary value, who feels that the question of its inspiration is irrelevant and that it can be taught from a "religiously neutral" viewpoint, must necessarily teach it from an irreligious viewpoint. For either one accepts the Bible as the Word of God or denies that it is the Word of God; there is no middle ground.

THE EDITOR



*"Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake." (I Timothy v, 23)*

Rue Magoo likes to read the Bible,  
Its sayings wise and terse.  
For anything he likes to do  
He always finds a verse.

# Good News

**I***N Catholic Action groups lay people are discussing the Gospels. We asked Teresa Frazer, a member of the Young Christian Workers in New York, to tell us about the Gospel Inquiry.*

## **Teresa Frazer:**

My two friends and I walked home from Church one Sunday last Summer.

"That Gospel always throws me," I said.

"I thought Christ was being sarcastic," Jim ventured—"saying: 'O. K., make friends with the mammon of iniquity, and then you'll end up for all eternity with them.'"

"It seemed to me He was telling us to be as prudent about saving our souls as materialists are clever about reaching their goals, and saving their own necks," was Helen's guess.

Did He really want us to imitate such a shrewd character as the unjust steward?

"It's certainly confusing," all of us agreed.

## **the Gospel Inquiry**

As I thought about it later on, I realized that we had actually been making an informal Gospel Inquiry. That we should have been interested enough in Christ's words to discuss them was good. Only one thing was wrong. Not one of us could be definitive and say his or her opinion was the right one.

The Gospel Inquiry, which is an actual technique used by most organized Catholic Action groups, is a method of learning the Word of Christ by reading, meditation, and discussion by the group. It incorporates two wonderful truths of the Church. That she is the orthodox interpreter of Scripture; and that the Holy Ghost continues to inspire Christians personally through grace, giving them new insights into, and new applications of the Gospel for their own lives and own centuries.

This technique is also more than a method of *learning*. It is part of a method of apostolic formation. All the lay apostolate (whether it be expressed in unorganized groups, or in recognized sections of the Young Christian Workers, Christian Family Movement, Young Christian Students, teachers groups, et al.) is dedi-



cated to the job of making people and our environment more like Christ. How can we make anything like Christ, if we do not know what Christ was like?

Of course, the Liturgy, including the Mass and the Sacraments, does give us Christ. But we must go to the Gospels to complete our picture of the incarnate, the human Christ, eating food, sleeping in a boat, working with fishermen, teaching children, going to a wedding reception, washing His apostles' feet, crying at His friend's death; suffering, dying, redeeming. Christ being their model, lay apostles must see Him historically as well as *living* in the Church, so they might have a pattern; a concrete way of life for imitation.

### **personal interpretation—in the good sense**

How is this method of learning and formation carried out?—Each week the members of the group know what passage they will discuss at the parish meeting, or in their home. They meditate on it and think over the discussion questions. This brings the richness of "personal interpretation" (in the good sense) to the meeting, since each has been given some grace through prayer. Each has tried to make some connection with Christ's example and his own circumstances or state of life.

The discussion leader has also thought about and prayed over the Gospel. He, however, has gone over it with the chaplain. The priest has asked him questions, and clarified any misconceptions he may have had. He has made clear the actual historical meaning of the Scripture quotation and brought the wealth of his seminary training to the level of understanding of this young student, or parent, or worker. He has asked him to tell him some ways this could be applied to workers, students or parents. In the meantime, the priest himself is growing in his awareness of the situations of lay people.

The night of the meeting comes around. By asking questions and encouraging discussion, the leader brings out the thoughts of every one there. Far from being a school for budding heretics (as some might fear) the Catholic Action group should help the members clarify what is obscure and get rid of any of their mistaken ideas. A skillful and charitable leader, prepared by the priest, can (if necessary) steer the discussion back on the right track. He does not do this by squelching the members with pronouncements like: "Well, *Father* said," or "Oh, no, that's all wrong." But by throwing out more questions aimed at making the member defend his position, and by asking the group's opinion of it, the leader can usually help the "dissenter" to see what might

be confused in his interpretation. If discussions, through personality problems, ever reach a boiling point (!) the chaplain is always (or should be) there to explain tactfully the Church's teaching. This does not mean there is no room for personal and varied applications, within orthodoxy, as the many commentaries and colloquies of the saints well prove.

### **carried over into action**

The conclusion of the inquiry comes after a summary of all opinions, and a reaching of some common meaning. That conclusion is an *action* by each member. He or she promises to try to do it *this week*, God willing. Without this the CA group would be a Scripture course or an interesting discussion. It is the logical climax for a sincere Christian to have reached. . . . This is what Christ did for the sick. What should I do? . . . This is how Christ thought about marriage. How must I think?

Let's look at a typical inquiry and how it might be discussed, as well as the actions that might be taken by different occupational groups in different neighborhoods. The Gospel is that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10, 30-37).

"Jesus gave him his answer: A man who was on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho fell in with robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. And a priest who chanced to be going down. . . . Which of these, thinkest thou, proved himself a neighbor to the man who had fallen in with robbers? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. . . ."

1. Was the man left by the roadside in need of help?
2. Why do you think the priest and the Levite passed him by?
3. What kind of man must the Samaritan have been? Was it unusual for a Samaritan to help a Jew? Why?
4. What do you think Christ wanted us to learn from this story?
5. Do we ever come across someone in need of help? Give examples.
6. Can we show real love for people, even if we don't get along with them very well? In what specific ways? What opportunities will we look for?

The fellow leading the Gospel this night has gotten from the group the historical meaning: that the Samaritans were a segre-



gated group; that Jews didn't talk to them; that Christ explained the need of translating love of neighbor into action. Now visualize the other questions being answered by a round table of teen-agers; by a workers' group; by a family group; by a lawyers' group.

### **different responses**

One excuses the priest and says, "Maybe he was on his way to a sick call." The teen-agers decide the Samaritan was a great guy and that they're always seeing people who need help, and ducking out of the job. A minor miracle; three of them agree to baby-sit for their married sisters *without getting paid for it!* They are growing in mercy already.

Some workers in Harlem see that they themselves are segregated. One happens to hate all Jews because he has a Jewish landlord who hasn't painted in ten years. They discuss their own hate and prejudice. They decide to go out with some guys from work. A couple will try not to talk maliciously about Puerto Ricans as a whole group. Three fellows decide not to stick together at the next area meeting of the YCW, which will be interracial, but to mix with people from other neighborhoods.

A family group in Chicago discusses the fact that a race riot was caused by the reaction of whites to a colored family moving into the neighborhood. They discuss the fact that teen-agers wearing miraculous medals and Catholic high school sweaters were among those pitching the rocks through the windows. They each take the action to inculcate in their children the Church's principles of interracial justice and charity. One couple might talk to a particular family on their block who approved of the riot. They might as a whole group unite with a civic organization for more concrete political action on this issue.

A lawyer in Westchester has been avoiding a man in his firm since he thinks he's a communist. The man is always talking up the Tenants' League, the advantages of a more co-operative economic system, etc. Instead of smearing the man, the lawyer begins to realize that he himself rides by Harlem every day in his Chrysler up the West Side Drive, without having a care in the world whether he should be taking responsible action in the community for slum clearance. He resolves to speak to the man this week and get to know him better.

### **living words—not pulpit oratory**

What are the advantages of the Gospel Inquiry? Many people will admit that Catholics, perhaps because we have the treasure of the Mass and the Sacraments, often ignore the comple-



mentary treasure of the Bible. Some may say it's unnecessary, because we hear some Gospel every Sunday.

There is no doubt that our ears perk up when on a particular Sunday a priest, steeped in the everyday life of the laity, turns up for the sermon. To him, and consequently to the people, Christ becomes contemporary, a flesh and blood reality, to be reincarnated in each of us. He is full of modern parables. The vineyard keeper brings on a parallel between management and labor. The rich young man becomes the Dartmouth student. A certain man can't come to God's Feast because he's working Sundays to pay off his house in Levittown. The Nativity recalls present housing problems.

This priest is priceless; but he is rare. More often the commentaries are dry didactic explanations ending in the same clichés: "Let us, my dear brethren, imitate Christ's humility all during our lives." Or "Let us, my dear people, follow Christ's example and always seek to do the will of His Father."

I am certainly not taking it upon myself to criticize the preaching of our priests. They themselves realize the danger of emphasizing the Liturgy to the neglect of preaching (see *The Priest*, July 1953). But to most modern lay people, after twenty or thirty years of Sundays, these exhortations become so much pulpit oratory. The average Catholic needs to be taught *how* to be patient, *how* to be humble; *how* to do the will of God in all things. Now we can listen without even hearing the Gospels, we've heard them so much. We need to think them out for ourselves and make personal, specific applications, under the guidance of the priest working closely with us.

### **the Gospel vitalized**

That is the advantage of the discussion method. Anyone who has ever participated in an inquiry will agree to its fruitfulness. Any priest who has such a group will delight in seeing the Word of God becoming so familiar to the laity. He will above all delight in seeing them begin to grow more and more each week like Christ.

I remember a teen-ager I had in religious instruction class who never said a word all year. The first night we started the Gospel Inquiry at my home, she talked so much I couldn't believe it was the same person. This is true of adult groups too. Everybody wants to get into the act. As the weeks have gone by Christ has become *Someone* to the group; Someone they want to follow and love. The Gospel Inquiry has had the effect of a pictorial study by the weekly glances into different episodes in Christ's life.

The timeliness of this is clear. If there was an age when people found it difficult to follow abstract ideas, ours is probably the peak due to TV and movies. I do not mean to suggest that the Gospel study will ever be sufficient alone, for the formation of apostles.

Each group must integrate into the meeting a factual study of their *temporal problems*. It is likewise obvious that ordinarily no sanctifying grace, no motivation for action, no strength for imitation would come to these Catholics without the Liturgy: the Mass and the Sacraments and prayer, the fountain of all apostolic life.

This growing interest in greater participation by the laity in the study and imitation of the Gospel is a sign of great hope for the Church. If it continues, no longer will it be said that most Catholics don't read the Bible; no longer will people fear that Christ is not imitable in an industrialized, materialistic age; nor will they be able to claim that priests are not close to the problems of their people in their attempts to imitate Christ. It is a three-way affair: priests and laity and Holy Trinity conspire to make the Bible live.

In the hearts of His twentieth-century priests and lay apostles, Christ goes on writing fresh gospels in His ageless and ever-living Church. And that is certainly "good news."

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## UNLESS WE DIE

Unless we die  
We abide alone  
Like the leaf that clings to a winter tree  
Blackened and blown.

Unless we die  
We have vanity's treasure  
Like the matron who lives in an empty home  
For bitter pleasure.

Unless we die  
Alive and well  
We tread alone eternity's measure  
In desert hell.

—Elaine Brennan



# What to Look For in the Bible

(A condensation of an article by Yves Congar, O.P.,  
from *La Vie Spirituelle*, October 1949)

"For whatever was formerly written was recorded for our instruction, that through patience and the consolation of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom., xv, 4). This is an invitation to read and study Sacred Scripture—an invitation that has always been gratefully accepted by Christians.

What to look for in the Scripture? The *meaning* of things, of all things, visible and invisible, the *meaning* of human life and human history *from God's point of view*.

The Old Testament is a history of the Jewish people, but it is not a history of them as, for example, the *Annals* of Tacitus is a history of the Roman people. The Old Testament is the history of Israel as God's people, from God's point of view.

There are books that speak of things *as they are in themselves*. If you wish to know how the earth was formed and developed, don't look in the Bible but in a text-book of geology or paleontology. The aim of the Bible is not to tell us about things as they are in themselves (that is the domain of science), but about things and men *in relation to God*. In the Bible we find neither pre-history, history, nor philosophy; we find God's plan for men, a plan that has ruled from the start and has not as yet been completed.

This plan, whose unfolding fills the pages of Scripture and follows the march of God's people, is a plan to give Himself to men, to establish sociable relations with them, to extend to them the very communication of life that constitutes the inner mystery of God's being, for in God one and the same life is communicated to several Persons. That is why Genesis starts with man as the "image of God" and why the Apocalypse (containing the unveiling of the divine plan) closes with the nuptials of the Lamb—the nuptials, the espousals, that is, the realization of the mystery

of one and the same life led by many, shared in by many. This is the mystery of communion that is foretold, prepared for, begun by the alliance of the Old Testament that was concluded through Moses, though it had been promised since Abraham. It is consummated by the blood of Jesus Christ, of the new and definitive alliance, after which there is no other. When at last we have received in the Son the quality of sons, co-heirs of the Father's patrimony, what more can we desire or even imagine? From henceforth we belong to the new and definitive alliance. We too must await the consummation of that which we have received in germ.

There are unfulfilled promises still in God's plan that await fulfillment. That is why the Christian faith essentially includes hope. To believe in Jesus Christ means to accept the challenge and to lead one's life in the promise of one who has promised us eternal life and resurrection unto immortality.

Perhaps now we can appreciate one of the major difficulties in the study of Sacred Scripture. It is a dense forest and we are always running the risk of missing the forest for the trees. Sacred Scripture is a progressive revelation of God's plan for the world and men. The parts can be grasped only within the whole, for they are moments in which the whole plan is applied and have meaning only in terms of the whole. Sacred Scripture must be read synthetically. What we need is a key that will release the meaning of the whole as well as the parts in all their details.

We should realize, however, that one of the most precious fruits of frequenting the Scriptures is a *deep consolation*, for we are never alone when we have the Bible in hand. We know with complete assurance that Someone is thinking about us, that Someone is looking for us, that Someone is with us. Our soul is refreshed and invigorated as by the company of a friend.

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the lips of God. Sacred Scripture is, with the Eucharist, the bread descended from heaven. If God acts through His sacraments to unite us to Himself, He acts no less effectively in the sacrament of His Word. Does not the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass give us both? Do not its two principal divisions bring us both?

In the Scriptures, as well as in the Holy Eucharist, do we not find the bread of life that will nourish us who are called to lead beyond this world, an everlasting life of bliss?





## ***This is Milly Lovemyself***

She captivates the masses in drawing rooms  
And swimming pools.

She's never seen without her furs,  
Her nylon mesh and jewels.

She'll help on every cause there is  
If it does something for her.

She prances down the middle aisle  
Every single Sunday.

It's "Yes, my dear" and "really"  
On every new committee;

She spends an hour before bed  
Practising to be witty.

"Of course I'm Catholic," she says,

"To deny it would be silly,

I spend my days in loving God—

After I tend to

Milly!"

JEAN M. BAILLARGEON

# How to Read the Bible

**T**HIS article deserves to be read a number of times. Not that it is especially difficult—just that it contains so much truth that won't be grasped at once.

*Father Chiffлот is a French Dominican and his article originally appeared in La Vie Spirituelle. We are indebted to James M. Egan, O.P., for translating it along with the article by Father Congar also in this issue.*

It would be presumptuous for anyone to think that he could answer the question of how to read the Bible in the way that so many Christians are asking it. Only the Bible itself, when read with docility to the Holy Spirit Who inspired it and under the guidance of the Church who guards it, can give the answer in any adequate fashion. Trying to learn how to read the Bible is not a matter of learning a *human* technique, but of being attentive to the *mystery* of the Word of God—a mystery that will always surpass our conceptions and our techniques.

Here I shall only attempt an approach to the mystery. I shall try to stand alongside the Christian, who, having opened his Bible, goes from enthusiasm to puzzlement, and, if possible, help him to avoid many questions that are badly formulated. But I shall not pretend to clarify his difficulties by any other light than that of the Bible itself. So, after having indicated some difficulties, I shall propose some principles for the understanding of Sacred Scripture and some ways of reading the Bible. But first we must reply to a preliminary question.

## **should the Bible be read?**

We need not pause too long in answering this question, for the answer is clear. It can be summed up in three phrases: reading the Bible is not obligatory; it is not forbidden; it is recommended.

1) *It is not obligatory.* By this we mean that actual, personal reading of the text of Sacred Scripture is not necessary for salvation. Many documents of the Church assert this clearly, especially when they are concerned with condemning propositions such as the following of Quesnel: "It is useful and necessary, everywhere and for all types of persons, to study and to know in the first place the spirit, the piety and the mysteries of Sacred Scripture."



## by T. G. Chiffot, O.P.

Such condemnations may surprise us; we must weigh well their import. The Holy Fathers certainly have no intention of denying that faithful adherence to divine revelation, whose primary source is the Word of God as found in the Bible, is not necessary for salvation. They do deny that each of the faithful must *personally* consult the text of the Bible. To insist that such personal perusal of the Bible is necessary is to misunderstand both the place that the Bible holds in the teaching of the Church and the organic unity that exists between the teaching Church and the faithful who are taught; the simple Christian who does not read the Bible, but listens to the Church, is already living the Bible. And that is why it would be the height of folly for the "enlightened" Christian, who is familiar with the Bible, to show contempt for his brother who is ignorant of the text of the Bible, but docile in his faith. The one and the other, according to the measure of their love, live on the same Word of God.

2) *It is not forbidden.* Contrary to a widespread prejudice, the Church has never forbidden the faithful to read the Bible, nor prohibited its translation into the vulgar tongue: no authentic document can be cited to this effect. The Church does require, in the case of translations, guarantees of fidelity and understandability, which her imprimatur assures.

3) *It is recommended.* To all Christians, but with special urgency, to those who have a mission to teach. This has been true of the Church throughout her history. The present Holy Father is simply quoting St. Jerome, when, in his Encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, he says: "To be ignorant of the Scriptures, is to be ignorant of Christ."

### **the Bible—the normal means for growth in Christ**

This linking of the Scriptures with Christ casts a light on the Church's recommendation to read the Scriptures: familiarity with the Bible is not suggested as a spiritual luxury but rather as the *normal means* for growth in Christ. Just as Communion once a year is "sufficient" to avoid serious sin, whereas the desire for a more fervent spiritual life leads to frequent and even daily Communion, so too it is "sufficient" simply to cling to the elementary teaching of the Church (indeed, even the illiterate are not excluded from the highest forms of contemplation), yet the normal tendency of a faith that is conscious of itself is to go to the Word of God as it is actually found in the pages of the Bible. As aware-

ness of how much we need the Body of Christ is a sign of spiritual health, so a desire for the Word of God, in the individual Christian and in the community, is a sign of the greater or lesser vitality of the faith.

Let us add to this essential consideration two others, secondary, it is true, yet by no means negligible.

1) *Christian life runs the risk of becoming boring* in the exact measure in which it loses contact with its vital sources—the Bible, the Liturgy, the Sacraments, the community. A Christianity divorced from vital contact with the Bible, compressed into brief formulas for those in a hurry, or handed out in the form of sugar-coated pills for the thin-skinned, can inspire only a tepid life. It cannot provide that rich spiritual fulness (*spiritualis pinguedo*) that only divine nourishment can provide. Manuals of dogma or moral theology, even methods of spirituality, can assure orthodoxy of mind and keep souls on the path of virtue; but it is contact with the living Word of God that gives joy; tap water is drinkable, but it is spring water that really quenches the thirst.

2) Vital contact with Christian sources, especially the Bible, is a necessary condition for creating a Christian culture or comprehending the monuments of the Christian past. This is true not only of works that may properly be called sacred (above all, the Liturgy), but even of works of art and literature that have grown in Christian ground. They are replete with biblical reminiscences and stamped with a biblical sensibility that only those well acquainted with the Bible can ever appreciate. One must know the Bible in order to begin to understand Chartres or Mt. Saint Michel, Dante or Claudel, Fra Angelico or Rouault.

### **living water or waste land**

When the Christian opens his Bible, what does he find? Perhaps we can sum up the experiences of most readers by saying that they make two apparently opposite discoveries.

In many passages of Sacred Scripture they discover a spring of living water at which it is easy to quench their thirst. To every Christian of good will, the Bible, at one time or another, speaks as it spoke to St. Augustine, when he heeded the voice that said: "Take and read"; as it spoke to St. Francis of Assisi, when he heard in Church the passage about not possessing two coats. There are, as it were, passages written just for us, which we can understand without a commentary. In them faith instinctively discerns the transcendence of the Word of God; a Voice we have never heard before is recognized as speaking to us. In such passages, without



even looking, we find a message for ourselves; we find, as St. James says, a "looking-glass" in which we catch the image of the face we were born with, and of the face of our spiritual rebirth.



Such effortless and fruitful understanding of the Word of God is what we always look for, not only in special passages, or on certain occasions, but every time we open our Bibles. To determine if and how this is possible is the purpose we had in writing these pages of introduction. Whatever be our final conclusion, let us keep in mind the fact that the Bible will always be for us a place of unforeseen and unmerited encounters. It is up to us to be faithful to the grace of these moments and when the Bible seems like an arid waste to return to these familiar spots, these oases, where our thirst has once been quenched and may be once again. Why not make a map of these places, to mark each new discovery? Each one will have to make his own map; no doubt the marks will be more dense the closer we get to Jesus—in the Gospels and the Epistles; yet frequent enough in the Psalms, the Prophets, in Job, and in other places that the Liturgy will bring to our attention. To the persistent searcher, the historical and apocryphal books will also reveal their hidden waters.

Readers, we said, make a second discovery—of the waste land of the Bible, much like the desert the Jewish people had to traverse in order to reach the promised land. It is a desert where the marches are long and wearying, where a thousand dangers lurk, where one must dig deeply to find only bitter water, where one is tempted to murmur, where, even, one must beware of mirages.

In a word, the reading of the Bible raises a host of questions, which, if the reader is unable to answer them or does not even perceive their import, turn into so many obstacles to his journey through the sacred pages. Thus many Christians become discouraged after a few attempts to read their Bible; others, more presumptuous, although equally uninformed, brashly solve every difficulty according to their own lights, caring little that they distort the Scriptures with contradictory interpretations.

## difficulties in reading the Bible

We must indicate some of these difficulties now before we go any further.

The simple meaning of a text in many cases is obscure the first time it is read. The paradoxical logic of St. Paul, the visions of the Apocalypse and their connections, certain key-words of St. John, the shifting perspectives of the prophetic books—these do not reveal themselves after one reading. Even the clearest texts of the Gospels frame a background that is often obscure; phrases (such as the "kingdom of heaven," "the Son of Man") have a precise value that escapes our grasp and a richness that eludes our reach. So we turn to the notes placed at the foot of the text by an editor who is more or less competent, or, if we are more learned, we consult a concordance. Whatever we do, faith must wait to seize the Word of God until reason has done a little preparatory investigation.

Nor are we yet through with reason. For here it is again, inquiring about the *truth* of the Bible, raising all sorts of "critical" questions. The most childlike faith cannot stop these questions from coming to mind. We read the first three Gospels and find striking resemblances among them—and no less striking divergences. How come, we ask, and are face to face with the "synoptic problem." Now we read the Gospel of St. John—and his differences, both of matter and form, from the other three leap to the eye, and we have the "joannine problem." These are questions that are raised *by the Bible itself*.

Other questions are raised when we compare the Bible with the results of the profane sciences: the age of the world or of man, for example, which are much greater according to the findings of science than the chronologies of the Bible would indicate.

These few examples give some idea of the host of questions raised by even a brief encounter with the Sacred Scripture; such questions cannot be dismissed as mere "curiosities," nor should they be resisted as "temptations against faith." They formulate difficulties that have been used and are being used to foster unbelief; it is normal that they should be felt by the Christian reading his Bible. They were known and discussed by the Fathers of the Church. To acknowledge their existence and seek their solution is not "making room for doubts," nor preparing to "defend" the faith. Rather we are trying to smooth faith's path, so that we may reach more exactly, that is, more "faithfully" its object—what the Word of God is saying to us.

## faith raises questions

As a matter of fact, the Christian who reads his Bible soon realizes that the *real* difficulties begin after these previous obstacles have been swept away, when he is at last face to face with the Bible as the Word of God and discerns quite clearly "what God has said." Now the difficulties flow from the condition of his faith, from the radical disproportion between the mind of the creature and the mystery of the Creator. For God is absolutely simple, and we are complex; until the moment of the face to face vision in heaven, God reveals Himself to us according to the laws of our complexity, in a multiplicity of "articles of faith," in the "economy" of the biblical revelation. We shall have to return to this point; for the moment it is enough to realize that faith (unlike vision) cannot be a repose, much less a sleep, of the mind. Now we know "in enigmas," and we want to penetrate them. Hence the continuous movement of thought, "the cogitation," as St. Thomas puts it (II-II, q. 2, a.1), following St. Augustine, which is the beginning of "theology." Every Christian theologizes, if his faith is alive, for a living faith is forever raising questions. A Christian who reads his Bible with faith is continually faced with questions, which are, in fact, theological difficulties.

What happened to the eyewitnesses of Our Lord's life is an example for us. The Twelve were in daily contact with the God-Man; yet what struck them most forcefully at one time was some unescapable sign of His humanity: fatigue, sleep, agony, death; at another, some glimpse of His divinity: the calming of the sea, the blinding light of Thabor, His appearances after the resurrection. Therefore they asked the question, "Who, then, is He?" (Mark, iv, 41), which continually teased their faith, until it reached a full confession of the mystery of Christ: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God," "My Lord and My God."

To us also the Bible reveals God and the works of God; but in a lengthy story made up of human deeds and human words. In one place the transcendence of God shines forth in all its splendor, at another it lies hidden. Now we witness His mercy, now His justice, which we have a hard time not thinking of as His "injustice." At one time we are keenly aware of the imperious demands of God's holiness, at another all we are conscious of is the seemingly endless series of preparatory steps along which God is ever leading His people. The Christian who reads his Bible and wishes to get a glimpse of God's face, must also take the long road, must, as it were, time and time again, undergo an apprenticeship in his faith.



It will be hard for him not to feel that the road gets lost in the sands. He will come upon passages that seem to have nothing at all for the religious spirit: genealogies, enumerations, itineraries, topographical details, legal codes and juridical minutiae, architectural directives and vestment patterns, with which so many pages of Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus are loaded down; like a child eager to get on with the story the reader will be tempted to skip all these in his quest for God. Other texts make enjoyable enough reading, but we wonder about their spiritual value: more or less edifying anecdotes that occur in Genesis, Judges, Samuel or Kings; incidents that witness to a rather rudimentary morality; maxims of human wisdom, such as occur in Proverbs or Ecclesiasticus, that smack of middle-class morality. Are such passages fit for spiritual reading?

Why not? We can, at least, follow the advice of Claudel and, turning from "the meagre breasts of the literal sense," remind ourselves that a spiritual meaning may lie hidden here. But that brings up another question—the senses of Sacred Scripture; i.e. the various meanings of the sacred text.

The question of the senses of Scripture has a very wide application. It is not simply a matter of seeking a "hidden meaning" in otherwise dry passages; it is rather a process that corresponds to a peculiarity of Sacred Scripture, i.e., of meaning more than it directly states.

Is not the existence of "spiritual meanings" an illusion, a figment of the imagination? Most of the Fathers of the Church and the mystics have read Scripture this way. The way in which the Liturgy uses the texts of Sacred Scripture is another example. Should we not then admit that in fact the Word of God is inexhaustible, that each of its statements, breaking through the confines of its direct meaning, contains an allusion to the whole of the mystery from which it derives, and that for us also—if we do not extinguish the Spirit—this Word ought to become, not only living water, but a *fountain* of living water leaping up into everlasting life?

### **some principles for the understanding of Sacred Scripture**

The Christian is not left to his own devices to find an answer to the kind of problems we have just indicated. The Church has had the Sacred Scriptures long before he picked them up. Within the Church men have dedicated their lives and their labors to understanding the sacred text; they, under the guidance of the Church, are quite anxious to offer their brotherly services to anyone who wishes to read the Bible. The principles we are going to list

have been drawn from these two sources. The surest light will come from the unchanging faith of the Church. Nevertheless, the progress made in biblical studies during the last fifty years plus the theological reflection that has been devoted to the results of such study can aid us in determining just how the light of faith, ever ancient and ever new, illumines the problems that reading the Bible brings to our minds today.

### **The Bible—Word of God and word of man**

The Bible is the *Word of God*. The Bible itself makes this claim (II Tim., iii, 16; II Peter, i, 21); this is what the Church believes about the Bible. The Scriptures are "inspired" by God, by the Holy Ghost. Hence they have God for "author." So say the Fathers of the Church; so the Councils of the Church have defined. For example, the Council of Florence holds "that one and the same God is author of the Old and the New Testaments, that is, of the Law, the Prophets and of the Gospel, for it is under the inspiration of the same Holy Ghost that the saints of both Testaments have spoken" (Denz. 706). And the Council of the Vatican asserts that the books of both Testaments, in their entirety, "written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have God for their author" (Denz. 1787).

On the other hand it is obvious that the Bible is also the *word of man*. It was written in human language, Hebrew or Greek, in such and such an epoch, by men (whether their names are known or not) and for men.

Here lies the *mystery* of the Bible—it is the book written by the hands of men that is the Word of God, that has God for its author. This is a mystery analogous to the mystery of the Incarnation, for which it is something of a preparation. "God, having spoken of old to our forefathers through the prophets, . . . has at last in these days spoken to us by His Son. . . ." (Heb., i, 1). We can offer no better explanation of the mystery of the Bible than the mystery of the Incarnation. For these words of the Creed: "Who spoke through the prophets," are an echo of the other words of the Creed: "And He became flesh."

*Who spoke*—The Bible is the Word of *God*. There would be no Bible, if there had not been a "revelation"; before there was the written word, there was the initiative of God to speak to us that we might know what He knew and willed. "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man, except the spirit of man dwelling in him? Just so, no one comprehends the secret things of God except the Spirit of God. But we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit proceeding from God, in order that we

might understand the gifts God has freely given us" (I Cor. ii 10-12). Therefore the Bible comes from God, from the interior Word that utters Itself exteriorly for our sake.

*Through the Prophets*—the Bible is the word of *men*. Revelation is not an entrance into the beatific vision, transcending the normal functioning of the human intellect; it is not an interior word, disclosing secrets that must not or could not be unveiled. But, first of all, for the prophet himself, and then, through him for us, revelation is expressed through events, gestures, visions, concepts, words, that lay hold of the senses, the imagination, the intellect; it is expressed in human thoughts and human words, social, transmittable, written. The first "incarnation of the Word."

St. John says (i, 14): "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. And we saw His glory." This is the lowering, the emptying, of the Son of God made man.

Do we not have here the key to many of our scriptural difficulties? Will he who reflects on the Bible in the light of the mystery of Christ be disturbed by any of the "very human" difficulties that his reading of the Bible will raise? We can scarcely expect the Word of God to offer itself to us in a less humble guise than the Son of God Himself. "We have *seen* His glory," says St. John. Now what St. John "heard, saw with his own eyes, gazed upon and handled" (I John, i, 1), was a Man—Who was the "Word of Life." It was necessary that Christ live with St. Peter, eat and walk with him, in order that Peter (and we, linked to Peter by an uninterrupted chain of witnesses) might confess that "which eyes hath not seen, nor ear heard," that which "flesh and blood hath not revealed," namely, that "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." Such human intercourse is also necessary to understand the Word of God: listening to words handed down (*fides ex auditu*), reading a book written by the hand of men, all the work that must be done to understand it.

### **the inspiration of Sacred Scripture**

"Inspiration"—here is the mysterious spot where the divine and human meet in the pages of the Bible. To understand it rightly, we must avoid two errors, similar to the errors through which knowledge of Christ had to pick its way.

Many who were too well acquainted with Christ refused to believe in Him. "Is He not the carpenter's son?" "We know this Person's origin; but when the Christ comes, no one will know His origin."

So also, after having read, analyzed and annotated the Bible one will say: this is a book made by the hand of men. The text



itself presents us with many authors who follow one another, contradict and correct one another; their thought betrays traces of their times, their surroundings, their preoccupations, their hesitations. They have utilized documents that existed before them. We can trace the influences they have undergone, detect resemblances to, and borrowings from, profane writings. This is the position taken by rationalistic critics of the Bible. Such a position cannot be Christianized simply by saying that God has helped, from the outside, as it were, this human work in order to preserve it from error and that therefore His authority imposes it on our belief. Such an explanation falls far short of the full meaning of the Church's declaration that God is the *author* of the Bible.

When he heard the prediction of the Passion, St. Peter cried out: "Mercy on Thee, Lord! this shall never happen to Thee," forgetting the mortality (even to the death of the Cross) of Him Whose divinity he had confessed. The first Christian heresy was docetism, which in various guises refused to admit that the Son of God was really crucified.

Similarly there are those who are tempted to a "biblical docetism" (an expression of Father Vosté, O.P.). Fortified with the dogmatic formula, "God is the author of the Bible," convinced by their own spiritual experience of the transcendence of the Word of God revealed under the letter of the text, they refuse to see, or take seriously, the human elements and the deficiencies that the critics point out. For them, the Bible is literally "dictated" by God to passive authors, as the Moslems believe that the Koran is a work that came forth, just as it is, from the thought of Allah, "uncreated." Nevertheless, the Book itself bears witness to its "humanity," which is not a deception.

We must therefore admit with the Church that the inspiration of the Holy Ghost does not exclude, but assumes, the activity of men, so that the Bible, having God for its author, *also* has human authors.

### **from both God and man**

Certainly it is not easy to express the mystery of this sovereign motion of God, which is received vitally and actively by the sacred author. Attempts to express it remind us of similar attempts to express the mystery of the free and meritorious act of the human will under the motion of grace. In both cases, something comes from both God *and* man. We must avoid imagining any division of labor: this to God, this to man. We must remember that one of the elements—the action of God—is transcendent to the other, is the creator of the other, and therefore is capable of laying hold of

it without destroying it. *Everything is from God, everything is from man.* God, the Creator, gives to everything life, movement, being; nevertheless, each thing has its own autonomy, and its causality is not merely apparent, a disguise for the First Cause. It is the grace of God that saves; yet each man is free and must "take by violence" the kingdom to which the Father "draws" him.

In somewhat the same way, the divine motion, falling on the prophet or the sacred writer, inspires the whole process of thought and action that terminates in the act of prophecy or a written book, without in any way hindering this act or this book from proceeding vitally from the human author. There is, then, nothing in the whole Bible—thoughts, images, words, down to the tail of Tobias' dog—that escapes divine inspiration. Likewise there is nothing in these thoughts, images and words that does not betray the marks of some man, of his genius, his mentality, his times.



How, then, are we to read the Bible? God Himself reads it, if I may dare say so, "over the shoulder" of those He inspires. He reads it from the inside. One day we shall read it the same way, if He deigns to introduce us to this glorious intimacy. We shall read it "in Him" and then we shall appreciate, from God's side, the "mechanism of inspiration." But until that happens? The words and the thoughts are accessible to us, offer themselves to our understanding that we may increase our faith. We must, as it were, retrace that path of inspiration. To find out how it works, we have no other means than, being assured of its existence, to keep looking for it with humble attention to the letter which the spirit has vivified.

There are a number of other questions closely connected with this one of inspiration; we have space to consider only two: the questions of literary forms and of biblical inerrancy.

### **literary forms**

What do we mean by a literary form? Anyone who has ever entered a library knows what we mean. A mathematics text,

history book, a cook book, a political speech, a fairy tale, a play, a novel, all these belong to diverse literary forms. They differ from each other (whatever the ability of their authors) by the end they have in view and the means they use to attain it. By the end: they are directed to diverse groups of readers, or if to the same group, they appeal to different levels of intelligence, heart, imagination, will. By the means: prose or poetry, a logical or fantastic order of ideas, precision or rich evocation in the use of words, depending on whether the aim is to demonstrate, to convince, or to entertain. Each book must be read in its own way.

The Bible also manifests a considerable diversity. It has its literary forms—though we must not be quick to identify them with the ones we are familiar with. If we realize that the Bible, which is the Word of God, is also the work of men, we shall not be surprised at this. Nevertheless, to know “what God has said”—which is the chief thing—we shall make the effort to discover the excellencies (as well as the possible deficiencies) of the literary forms that God was pleased to allow His witnesses to use. We shall not think ourselves obliged to read so many different works with exactly the same criteria. We shall let the Bible itself be our guide and shall help each other to divine its purposes. We shall learn to distinguish between the way St. Luke expresses himself and the way St. John does; and we’ll not be concerned if the same trait of the Master strikes them differently. We shall not read in the same way the account of the creation and of the passion, realizing they are not the same type of “history.” We shall not put the cries of Job’s desperate hope on the same level with the imperturbable wisdom of Ecclesiasticus. We shall be able to interpret the gestures and the words of the prophets. We shall seek to find the spirit through the diverse mentalities of the authors and shall be more certain that we have found it for having done that. (We shall also realize that the experts in exegesis are not wasting their time on curious trivialities, but can be a real help to us in this particular difficulty.)

The question of literary forms is intimately connected with that of the inerrancy of the Bible.

### **Are there errors in the Bible?**

The *inerrancy* of the Bible is an immediate consequence of its divine inspiration. God is truth: He can neither deceive nor be deceived. Since He is the author of the Bible by His inspiration, it certainly can contain no error. But are there not errors in the Bible? Even the least critical reader will find what looks very much like error—if he has read his Bible without an eye to the



niceties of biblical language. He will come across, for example, two accounts, both inspired, yet divergent, of the same event. Can this be explained except by admitting error, at least partial, in one or the other inspired text?

The answer to this difficulty is as simple in principle as it is varied and delicate in application. There is truth or error only where there is *affirmation*, and in the measure in which there is affirmation. What we have just said about literary forms should make us realize that there is a corresponding variety in the degrees of affirmation and hence of possibilities of truth or error to be found in human language—and in the language of the Bible. There is a truth of mathematics and a truth of history; there is also a truth of legend, a truth of poetry, a truth of protest. Therefore we must pay humble attention to the biblical expression, which is as varied as the language and the heart of man, in order to embrace its content with the fidelity that is always demanded of us. When Ecclesiastes writes (iii, 19-20 Knox): "After all, man comes to the same ending as the beasts; there is nothing to choose between his lot and theirs; both alike are doomed to die. They are but a breath, all of them; what has man that the beasts have not? Frustration everywhere; we are all making for the same goal; of earth we were made, and to earth we must return," he is expressing truthfully a doubt that faith must overcome. When Peter proclaims (Acts ii, 32): "This Jesus God raised up, of which we are all witnesses," he is stating a simple fact. Thus the truth of human language in the inspired pages of the Bible is guaranteed by the divine Truth; nevertheless the inerrancy of the Bible can never be rightly gauged unless we carefully evaluate the possibilities (and the deficiencies) of human language.

But are we still faithful to the *mystery* of the Bible? It is this very mystery that Pius XII draws our attention to, after he has referred to the various literary types to be found in the Scriptures. In the *Divino afflante Spiritu*, he states: "For of the modes of expression which, among ancient peoples, and especially those of the East, human language used to express its thought, none is excluded from the Sacred Books, provided the way of speaking adopted in no wise contradicts the holiness and truth of God. . . . For as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, 'except sin,' (Heb. iv, 15) so the words of God, expressed in human languages, are made like to human speech in every respect, except error." (Vd. *A Companion to Scripture Studies*, Vol. I. Steinmuller, p. 475.) Note that the Holy Father also has recourse to the analogy between Our Lord and the Bible.

## The Bible, sacred history

The Bible is the Word of God. We must now turn our attention to another character of this Word: it does not reveal to us in a flash the eternal nature of God, but is content to recount the temporal intervention of God in our human history. God introduces us into His eternity by first entering Himself into our history. Our God, the God of the Bible, is not the God of philosophers and sages, He is "the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob." Another consequence of the mystery of the Incarnation in which the Bible shares.

The Gospel of St. John begins with the imperfect tense of eternity: "In the beginning was the Word." In v. 14, we find the "historical" past tense: "And the Word was made flesh." Thus the eternal Word passes into history. Even in the Creed, there is a date: "under Pontius Pilate." The Bible is a history.

Yet it is a *sacred* history, a history in which the protagonist is "the Eternal One," just as it is a human word, which is the Word of God. A history in which God takes a part is as disconcerting as a human language in which God speaks. And once again we must hold tight to both ends of the chain that links together the mystery of this divine working, similar to the mystery of the Incarnation.

A history. Therefore we shall not find in the Bible "ideas" pure and timeless, nor "myths" with an artificial moral, nor "dialectical moments" in which facts will be deprived of their reality in order to be set in a logical framework that will dominate and surpass them. We shall find *events*, such as the one that aroused such slight interest in the governor Porcius Festus: "about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts xxv, 18-19). Foundings of cities, migrations of peoples, battles, as well as countless insignificant personal adventures of men who lived and died. All events that happen but once, that do not fall under logical categories, that stretch out along the march of time that is irreversible and over distances that are insurmountable.

## Time in the Bible

Nevertheless a sacred history. Each event marks in time an intervention of God, of "the Eternal," so that each, without escaping the limits of time, takes on a meaning for all time: it reveals God, advances the plan of salvation. Furthermore the central event—the Incarnation of the Word—mysteriously gathers up all the events scattered throughout history and works them into an

"economy" of salvation. St. Paul, recalling what happened in the desert and the rock from which the Jews drank, adds: "And the rock was Christ" (I Cor. x, 1-6), because the event in the desert was already heading, under an impulse that transcends time from Him to Whom a thousand years is as a day, toward the event that took place on Easter morning; only in that event did it find its true meaning.

If, then, we wish to acquire some understanding of the Bible, let us forget neither time nor Him who holds the mastery over time. To skip the intervals, to annul the distances would be to forget time; it would be seeing the Old Testament merely as a figurative recital of the New; forgetting that its events have their own consistency, their own earthly existence. We would fail to understand the gradualness, the haltings, the reverses, of God's preparatory actions; we would succumb to the temptation to level out in front of Calvary the slopes of Mt. Moriah, up which climbed with measured steps an Abraham and an Isaac of flesh and blood. On the other hand, to "atomize" the events of the Old Testament into a meaningless series is to ignore God's mastery over time, to miss completely the "economy," that is, the working out of God's plan—which theology itself presupposes, for the glance of faith can learn much of the mysteries of God from the actions of God.

### **the senses of Scripture**

Is there one or many senses in Sacred Scripture? Must one look beyond the obvious meaning for hidden ones? What of the "spiritual sense" used by the New Testament citing the Old, the Fathers of the Church commenting on both, the Church in her liturgical prayer; is it a true biblical sense willed by God, present to the mind of the sacred author? Where does this "spiritual sense" begin, where does it end? The points we have already made about the human language of the Bible and its character as sacred history should help us to answer these questions more clearly.

Common sense tells us that the text of any literary passage, when it is well written and straightforward, signifies just one thing which the text wishes to make known: it has just *one* meaning. In only two instances this would not be the case: if the writer is so inept that he cannot find the right word, or if he is dishonest and wishes to equivocate. These instances are obviously to be excluded from the Bible. Therefore as far as the text of the Bible is concerned there can be but *one literal sense*.

If we keep in mind what has been said about the diversity of literary types used by the biblical authors, we shall not make the mistake of thinking that this literal sense is one that can be arrived

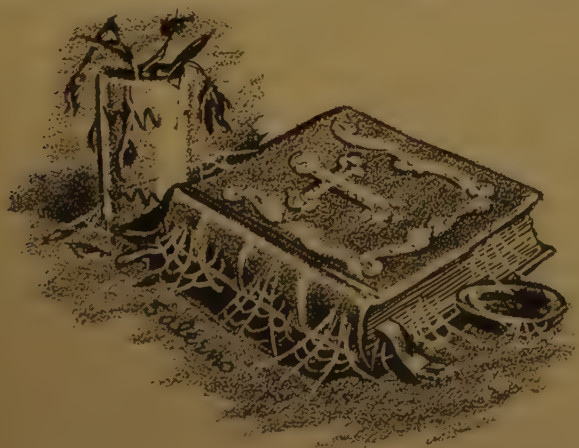


by a simple grammatical analysis of the text. We must use the same care we would in reading any piece of writing. The literal sense of a biblical passage may be metaphorical, ironic, allusive. It may be a narrative, a question, a command, a prayer. The passage may be conveying truths that are inexpressible. The literal sense is, therefore, not necessarily the sense that is immediately understandable, or a sense deprived of all spiritual content.

When we have reached the literal sense of a scriptural passage, have we thereby exhausted its intelligibility? By penetrating the literal sense, we grasp the reality it presents us. Now it can happen that this reality is related to another reality as a preparation for it, or a prefiguring of it. To grasp, by a new movement of the mind, the relation between reality A, of which the text speaks, and reality B, is to discover in the text itself a *second* sense by reading into it the second reality. This is called a "spiritual sense" because reality B is itself spiritual (though let us not forget that reality A may also be spiritual) and because the bond between them is also spiritual. If this sense is not to be arbitrary, the bond must be real.

### **the spiritual sense**

It is peculiar to the mystery of the Bible and its transcendence, that such a bond does exist between realities presented to us in the pages of Sacred Scripture. As we have seen, the Bible is sacred history; it is this that is the basis of the spiritual sense. As history, it reports thousands of events, records thousands of thoughts, all through the letter of the text. But it is sacred history controlled from the beginning to end by God Who transcends time; it has a direction, it is going somewhere, it has, in its totality, a mean-



**UNTOUCHED BY HUMAN HANDS**

ing. Undoubtedly, then, there reigns throughout the whole of the sacred text a spiritual sense which, by placing each event and each thought in the context of the whole of the economy of the redemption, gives it in the eyes of faith a meaning pregnant of the future, bearing an "eternal weight of glory."

How, in particular, is the spiritual sense found in the text of the Bible? Péguy has written that in Christianity everything happens three times, in the Old Testament, in Christ, and in His saints. Let us say more accurately that there are correspondences between the Old Testament and the New, between Christ and His saints. Between the "whole" Christ, the Mystical Body here below and the world of glory to come, correspondences which are true prefigurations, because there is a bond of causality between them, the one preparing for the other.

To recognize such prefigurations is to discern the spiritual sense of Sacred Scripture. It will be threefold: allegorical, showing the relation of some passage of the Old Testament to Christ and the New Law; moral, showing how the life of the Christian (especially as this life reproduces sacramentally the life of Christ) is foreshadowed in some event of the life of Christ; anagogical, seeing in the life of Christians the traits of eternal life. So, for example, the passage of the Hebrews through the Red Sea (the Passover, the Pasch), their "baptism" in water and fire, prepares for and prefigures the Christian Pasch, the death and resurrection of the Lord, the reproduction of this Pasch in Christian baptism; lastly, the passing, at the Last Coming of the Lord, of this world into the new.

### **the accommodated sense**

We can now trace the path that leads from the literal sense to the true spiritual sense (which rests on a real relation between two realities that has been itself revealed) and now we continue along it from the true spiritual sense to the "accommodated sense" (in which there is not such foundation). The "accommodated sense" depends upon the personal interpretation of a commentator and has as much value as the understanding, imagination, good taste and Christian sense of the one who proposes it gives to it. Such free interpretations of Sacred Scripture may border very closely on the spiritual sense, may have very tenuous connections with it, may verge on the fantastic or fall into contradictions.

What are we to think of them? Certainly theologians and Scripture scholars have a right to warn us against the abuse of such interpretations, reminding us that they are not real senses of Scripture. Nevertheless it would be wrong to condemn, for example, the use that the Liturgy makes of these senses; or to forbid to

Christian all liberty in the use of Sacred Scripture (provided that fantastic interpretations were avoided). The House of God is not a museum, in which the articles exposed carry a tag "Do not touch"; for it is the house of Our Father, which shelters the life of men—and also the play of children.

Nothing emphasizes more clearly than do these difficulties of interpreting Sacred Scripture, the last principle we wish to consider, viz, the bond between the Bible and the Church.

### **The Bible, the Church's Book**

To say that the Bible belongs to the Church is another way of saying that it is a sacred history. For a history presupposes a people, it belongs to a people; they alone can understand it as no historian can. Sacred history is the history of "the people of God"; it is only insofar as we belong to this people that the Bible becomes our history and has something to say to us.

Moses talked with God as friend to friend; Paul was lifted up to the third heaven where truths were disclosed to him which it is not permitted to any man to reveal. Yet it was not for the sake of this intimacy, this life alone with God, that the Word of God sought them out. It was for the people, whose leader Moses became, whose mystical identity with Christ was revealed to Paul on the road to Damascus. None of the witnesses of the Old or the New Testament received his message except for the people of God. That is why none can understand the message if he is outside the people—outside the Church.

The following points will make clear the relation of the Church to the Bible.

1) It is inexact to oppose, or even to juxtapose, Scripture and Tradition, as though these were "two" sources of revelation, distinct one from the other. It is more proper to say that Tradition comprehends Scripture. For the Word of God, before being committed to writing, began by calling into existence a living people (whose spiritual fulfillment is the Church); it was given to a people and became their living Tradition, guaranteed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. It was within this living Tradition that the Word of God was given a special (and because of divine inspiration, a privileged) expression. No text—no, not even the Sacred Text—can come between the living Word of God and the life that circulates in the Church. And it is *in the Church* which gives that Sacred Scripture is not a dead letter but the spirit that vivifies.

2) It follows, then, that the Church is the guardian and teacher of the Word of God. In regard to Scripture, this means:



That the Church guards the Scripture by fixing the "canon," that is, by determining in an infallible fashion what books are the inspired Word of God.

That the Church alone can determine the exact sense of Sacred Scripture, not, of course, by inventing it, but by recognizing what has been inspired of God. For, as St. Irenaeus said: "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God"; and only one who has the Spirit of God can understand what the Spirit has inspired.

Such determinations are made by the Church in various ways: by an express declaration of the solemn magisterium of the Church (this is rare); the unanimous teaching of the Fathers and the Doctors; or by the ordinary teaching of the Church, which serves as a framework for the understanding of Sacred Scripture.

3) As a practical consequence of the above, the Christian who reads his Bible should realize that he is never *alone*. This should serve as a warning and an encouragement. A warning: reading the Bible does not dispense him from the ordinary way of teaching in the Church (catechism, sermons, etc.), from prayer in common and the sacramental life, from the community of charity; separated from these roots, he would never understand the Bible, even misinterpret it. An encouragement: for united to the Mystical Body, he can trust in the help of the Spirit, and even his humblest effort will profit the whole Body.

### **different ways of reading the Bible**

Here we shall be content with brief indications and it should be clear that the distinctions are made merely for the sake of clarity. Guided by the Bible itself, by the Holy Spirit and the Church, the reader will perhaps adopt one way after another, pass from one to another, or combine them in various ways.

1) *A first "run-through."* Why not read the Bible as you would any other book? The visitor to Rome is advised by the guide books to start with a trip on the *circolare*, which is a street car that circles the whole of the city and gives you a good idea of it. Such reading will reveal many things and pose many questions, answers to which will be found only later. It does not exclude curiosity, nor religious feeling, nor the effort to comprehend; it is willing to sacrifice complete understanding of every passage and looks forward to the other kinds of reading.

2) *A "critical" reading.* Here we have the effort to understand, which is directed to the literal sense. An effort of reason, therefore, but directed and controlled by faith. One must try to understand the text (a good translation will help); try to set it in its context (here the first reading will prove its worth). Even so

any difficulties will remain and the reader will seek assistance in the commentators.

3) A *"liturgical" reading*. For many readers this will be their first approach to the Bible. There is a threefold benefit from reading the Bible while praying with the Church. First of all, it revives, during the course of the liturgical year, sacred history and our history; then, one has the chance to penetrate, during prayer, the precise theological meaning of revelation; lastly, one begins to develop, through the free use of the "spiritual sense" which the liturgy emphasizes, a feeling for the allusions, the correspondences, the resonances, that play such a part in the "spiritual sense."

4) A *"theological" reading*. This is the work of "faith seeking understanding," of faith formally seeking in the Bible the word of God in order to understand what it has revealed to us. This has been begun already in the above ways of reading, especially in the third. It is taken up now for its own sake and makes return to the pages of the Old and New Testament to discover what they have to tell us about God, the Trinity, grace, the Incarnation, etc.

5) A *"spiritual" reading*. This reading cannot without danger be separated from the liturgical and theological readings. Yet there comes a moment when the voice of the believing reason is silent, when the voice even of the Church is silent, in order to let each one hear what the Bible has to say to *him*. Having read the Bible at one's desk, with commentaries open at one's elbow, having listened in the psalmody of the Church, one should read the Bible at one's knees, as did the Little Flower and Charles de Foucauld. It then becomes the indispensable nourishment of a theological life.

6) A *"poetic" reading*. This is a dividend. Yet there is no reason why the Bible should not nourish the well-springs of dreams and of song, provoke in us all sorts of lyrical and dramatic expression, inspire all types of artistic productions, painting, sculpture, music and the dance. Wisdom gladly plays among the children of men and it is up to us to join in joyfully when the grace is given. There are no rules but the "rule of the game"—respectful familiarity and good taste, dictated by the delicacy of love. The Bible then becomes, as Claudel notes, a "book of admiration" as well as a book of adoration."

There are then different ways of reading the Bible; all are equally necessary. They serve different capacities, different vocations, different missions. Yet no one way can exclude the others. Let us use these gifts, in the Church and for the brethren, for God is not a God of disorder, but of peace" (I Cor., xiv, 33).



**C**HILDREN need to know and love the Bible now if they are to account it a treasure in later life. Mary Reed Newland, who has written for us frequently on raising children, insists it is possible to get them interested in Scripture.

## Reading the Old Testament to Children

**Mary Reed Newland:** Probably the reason people do not read Scripture to their children is that they do not read it to themselves. At least that is why I didn't, when I didn't. And why I do, now that I do. Probably another reason why they don't read it to their children is they are afraid of it.

"You don't mean to tell me you read the Old Testament to your small children and they understand it!" When I said yes, I do, and they love it, this young mother trotted home with doubt, tried it, and *her* children loved it. And since this is to be a short article, the best way I know of scouting all the apprehensions of mothers and fathers who have them on this score, is to say, "Try it—you'll see," and add a few things we have discovered that help along the way.

There is, I think, an important difference between reading from Scripture and reading "Bible stories," even from the excellent editions of Bible stories now available. We have several of t



ter, beautifully done with handsome illustrations, and our children never get enough of them—but we still read to them from the Bible itself. Because the whole object of reading from the Bible is to convince them these stories are really found there, can be highly entertaining and inspiring, and to pave the way to the day when they will want to follow our example and read it for themselves.

### **Adapting the Bible for children**

The first thing to understand is that you cannot read the Old Testament to children verbatim. Some of the new translations have passages which do make great sense as they stand, but usually you have to strip the words down to their age level and vocabulary. What it amounts to is a kind of story-telling after all, but with the book there to prompt you. It must be a “reading” to them, even if you merely skim the text with your eye, improvise and ad lib large parts of it. It helps those who can read, and do—over your shoulder—to see how one can transcribe the involved passages with their repetitions and intricate wording to make very modern sounding tales. Not that you remove them from their setting in antiquity, that would be wrong, but if you read them to children in their own language they are better able to see for themselves the similarity between men and their behavior several thousand years ago, and men and their behavior now. Whether they know it or not, they will begin to grow in the understanding that there is nothing new under the sun, and that sin and sanctity have always been a matter of one’s rebellion against, or love for, God.

### **Keep it interesting**

It is important to read ahead of time whatever story you have chosen, for a number of reasons all of which you will discover fast enough if you dive in without any preparation. First, because children are bored with too much repetition, with too many difficult names and family trees. If they are important to the story you can pare them down and use what is important, but leave the rest out. An example of this is the introduction to Mordechai, in the 2nd chapter, 5th verse of the Book of Esther. He is called “the son of Jair, the son of Semei, the son of Cis, of the race of Jemini who had been carried away from Jerusalem at the time that Nebechenezzor (same thing as Nabuchodonosor), king of Babylon, carried away Jechonias, king of Juda.” If the children know the story of Daniel, what this means is that Mordechai was a descendant of those Jews carried off by Nebechenezzor, among whom was Daniel and the three youths of fiery furnace

fame; maybe Mordechai was even some kind of buttonhole great-grand-cousin to Daniel. So it helps spark Mordechai's characterization to use this. Knowing who was his father, grandfather and great-grandfather leaves them cold and they will sit politely stone-deaf until all that is over.

### what about the hot passages?

Next there are passages from the Old Testament which read more like pages out of the *American Medical Journal* or *True Confessions* than Holy Writ, and stumbling onto these unprepared will involve you in some mighty touchy discussions of anatomy and the sins of the flesh. So one must be cued to skipping them ahead of time. The Book of Esther provides more examples—but at the same time is an exciting story which all children love. For instance, all those eunuchs around the palace, guarding gates, plotting, having charge over the concubines (horrors—what to do about concubines?). Needless to say, we do not go into the business of eunuchs and concubines, but translate them as “servants” and “er—sort of like wives,” explaining that in those days it was sometimes the custom to have more than one wife. The word virgin is used often, with undertones that indicate something very specific, so we translate it as a young maiden who was pure and good and had not married, and make very sure they do not attach to its frequent use the same gifts of holiness as were Our Lady’s.

Then there is King Assuerus’ habit of entertaining at banquets and ending up, after much drinking of wine, “well-warmed and merry.” It suffices to say the king was feeling rather jolly, and the children are content.

There’s that short passage (again in Esther, but do not think these things are peculiar to this Book alone—they appear all over the place) about the maidens competing for role as queen, going in to see the king in the evening and coming out in the morning and if they did not please him going off to the palace of the concubines. We omit this one entirely. And toward the end of the story there is Aman’s eleventh-hour attempt to save his neck by seducing the queen, while the king is out in his “garden set with trees” collecting his wits. There is little left to conjecture in this passage so we improvise, and translate the lines about the king’s return, his accusation: “The king was *wild!*” And when it goes on to say, “The word was not yet gone out of the king’s mouth and immediately they covered his (Aman’s) face,” we read: “Before the king was even finished yelling at Aman, they popped a bag over his head.” This is a great moment for all and the story

breaks up momentarily while all the small boys present pop bags over each other's head.

It is also important to read the footnotes ahead of time, so there need be no time out for investigating fine print. For instance, in the Book of Daniel it tells of Daniel and his friends refusing to eat the fine palace fare, but asking permission to have "pulse" instead. Pulse, the footnote tells, is "peas, beans, and such like." This is a good place to stop and discuss the merits of fasting and its spiritual rewards because Daniel and the youths looked finer and fairer after their fast than the others after their eating. And God rewarded Daniel with great gifts of grace after his fasting. In the story of David, too, there is mention of "frumenty," which is not explained in the footnotes but should be looked up in the dictionary. It is defined as "a pudding made of hulled wheat." All these things help to make the story warm and folksy and the children like to stop and compare them with the things they eat. It also helps to get such things as pea soup and baked beans, hot oatmeal, down them cheerfully when they are inclined to whine about eating their meals.

### **Skip the long prayers**

Another thing one must be prepared to omit, regretfully, are the long prayers. When children want a story, they want action—not a doxology. They will grow up to love the prayers, but most of the time are bored if you insist on breaking up a good story to read them. It is enough to say, "And then they said a lovely prayer about how good God was to them, and they thanked Him very much."

I was forced to surrender on the matter of long prayers when reading the story of the three youths in the fiery furnace, from Daniel. The children had used their own version of this Canticle for processions in the pasture in summer, but in the middle of this story all they wanted to know was whether the youths got out of the furnace—and trying to read the prayer was a total failure. John settled down to pulling his jersey up over his nose, Jamie to shredding the tobacco out of someone's stale cigarette, and Peter quietly to poking holes in the couch with a pencil. All these things indicate one thing solely—perfect and complete boredom. So we mentally blue-pencil the Canticle now and jump to the 91st verse (3rd chapter): "Then Nebechenezzor, the king, was amazed and jumped up right off his throne and said to his nobles, 'Good grief, didn't we throw three men tied hand and foot into the middle of that fire?' And they answered, 'We certainly did, O king.' And he said: 'Well, I see four men now, loose and walk-



ing around in the fire and not a blister on them, and the fourth looks like the Son of God.' ”

Jamie says: “Boy!”

John yells: “A miracle!”

And *that's* the reaction you want when you read your children the Old Testament. Hopalong was never like this. There is more good red blood spilled in these stories than in all the westerns from now to doomsday and it's all *true*. It's all told in terms of good and evil, with God the most important character of all, and if you read it well and moralize in a nice way as you go along (not too long-winded) they get the point and agree heartily.

### **don't sound Bible-ish**

One more thing is important and that is not to intone these stories, or give them your best in the flute-like voice department. If you are going to sound Bible-ish, they won't come running back for more very often. Really let go when you read, get excited, stick in little asides that help point up the humor, stop and encourage short discussions and especially make much of the small but endearing details.

Our Mother's Club, which meets monthly, did a session on reading the Old Testament to children and we recommend it as a good practise run for mothers who would like to try and are a little self-conscious. Each mother brought her own Bible and we took turns reading the story of Daniel aloud, improvising the way we would for the children. Most of us were reading it for the first time and it took us no time at all to get the knack. One mother for instance translated Nebuchenezzor's rebuke to his wisemen (called to tell him his dream) as, “You're *stalling*.” Every one whooped and hollered at this—it was such a perfect choice of word.

### **the story of Esther**

Perhaps we should go back to the story of Esther, for those who don't know it, and assure them it is not all delicate situations. There are wonderful accounts of the way the king decorated his palace for his banquets, and gave instructions at one of them that no one need drink or eat anything they didn't want. O boy—you could leave stuff on your plate and no one said a word. There are yards and yards of beautiful clothes and jewels for the maidens to wear, and knowing well how ladies dawdle over their dressing, the king gave all the competing maidens *twelve months* to get ready for the Queen Contest.

There is one passage in the beginning especially pertinent to wives. Queen Vashti is dethroned for disobedience to her husband.

and when the king asked his wise men what sort of punishment should be prescribed, Manuchen, the chief counsellor, gave a thought-provoking answer. Not only had she done a bad thing by her disobedience, said he, but if she were allowed to get away with it she would go about laughing at the king behind his back and soon the gossip of it all over the kingdom would have wives everywhere "despising their husbands." So he advised the king to write a letter for all the realm, reminding all that husbands were to be "masters in their own households."

Then there is Esther's plan for saving the Jews after Aman had manoeuvred their death warrant. Did she dash into the throne room weeping and wailing in sackcloth and ashes? No indeed. The way to a man's heart is through his stomach, so she put on her royal apparel, went before the king and invited him and Aman to a banquet. Not until the king was feeling quite nicely (well-warmed, etc.) did she tell him (this is at a *second* banquet) that Aman, the wretch, had plans to put her and her people to death. And Aman was duly escorted to the gibbet he had raised to hang Mordechai, and was hanged until he was dead. Hurray. Mordechai—Esther's uncle, incidentally—emerged triumphant, wearing garments of sky color and violet and wearing the king's own ring (which the king had the foresight to remove from Aman's finger before he was hanged) and promoted to position of overseer over the Queen's household.

## Love of the Jews

The last time we read the Book of Esther, after we were done explained to the children how the Jews celebrate Purim with fasting and prayer first, then feasting and little plays and masquerades, presents and sweets. And Jamie said: "Golly, I wish we were Jews."

It was a golden opportunity. "Well, Jamie, once there was a very holy Pope, Pius the eleventh, who said that spiritually we are the Jews. We are the brothers of Jesus, Who was a Jew, so that makes us brother to all His people. And when you read these wonderful tales about the Jews of old, their prophets and kings and queens and heroes, remember how much God loves the Jews, how He longs to have them know and love His Divine Son. Then you must remember to pray every night that they will receive the grace to know Jesus and love Him as we do."

"I know what," he said. "Tonight we can say the Rosary for the Jews." So we did, a Rosary well-warmed with love for all our Jewish brothers who are outside the fold.

## reading bears fruit

Reading the Old Testament to children teaches them many things. It probes far back to the roots of our own Liturgy, follows the course of events from the fall to the coming of Christ at Bethlehem and prophesies His glorious resurrection on Easter. It draws the whole plan of the redemption for them and begins to illuminate the prayers of the Mass. And together with the lives of the martyrs and saints of the New Testament, it gives them the best answer of all to the widespread proposition that men and women who love God in the heroic manner are sissies and cannot compete with cowboys and space cadets today. Perhaps most fruitful of all is their growth in understanding and love for the people of Israel and their desire to identify themselves with them.

There it is, part of the most exciting book on earth, and so many of us never open it. We cheat ourselves and our children of our richest heritage when we don't.



"Instructing the young in righteousness."



## BOOK REVIEWS

### The Fathers of the Church

#### A TREASURY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

By Anne Fremantle  
Viking, \$6.00

er "agin' or akin." Along with cat lovers and dog lovers, anthology fans are sooner born than made, I think. This book, an anthology of the Fathers of the Church, isn't going to make many such—and yet it really serves a useful purpose.

The function of an anthology is either introductory or summary, in a given field. *A Treasury of Early Christianity* is meant to be an introduction to the writings of the Fathers. But my own feeling is that people who are going to read the Fathers (not light fare), are going to take them straight, not mixed. As summary, however, rather than as introduction, the book has its point. It is sometimes recommended to vary our usual verse-by-verse, meditative reading of the Gospels, with a running, over-all survey of the four of them, so as to get the large meaning of Our Lord's life and mission. Just so, this book offers a kind of mountain-view of the Fathers, and charts the giant ebb and flow of the Holy Spirit in the Church during her first perilous centuries on earth.

It is a big book—over six hundred pages (at about a penny a page)—and to my mind criticism of any one selection, or omission, in such an extensive anthology is a little irrelevant. The basic divisions of the book are interesting, and they do manage to suggest the fundamental problems and movements within the early Church.

In her preface Miss Fremantle explains: "This 'Treasury' has been divided into seven sections. The first tries to show the kind of ideal person the Christian had in mind, wanted to be, and often succeeded in becoming. . . . Then follows a section of descriptions of what he believed: the bare bones, the skeletal structure of dogma and definition, together with accounts of creeds and councils. The sections on martyrs and monks are frankly human-interest stories: how many there were of both is an astonishment. . . . The section on the Life of Prayer is intended to show how the water of life continuously irrigates the individual soul, and through it flows out into the world. Whether the individual was in the monastery, the arena, the desert, or the barracks, journeying into exile or ruling a nation, the dialogue between man's single soul and its Maker, carried on in countless voices, has been uninterrupted. . . . Finally, there are a few poems—inadequate, as translations of verse always are. But it is hoped they will at least show that the Fathers, from the first to the last—Thoreau says we all must—*sang* their love."

In the New Testament the word "Father" means a teacher of spiritual things. It is he who enables a man to learn the doctrine of Christ, and to grow, by grace, in His image. Not only to grow, but even to be born. For if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, by the Gospel, I have begotten you. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."

It is no accident that the great bishops and writers of the first centuries have come to be called, collectively, "The Fathers of the Church."

Anthologies belong to that category of things to which literary people are ei-

For after the Blessed Mother of God, and the Holy Apostles, they did more to bring the Christian world into being, and to give it shape, than perhaps any other human instruments.

And finally, it is no accident that the Fathers are once again being read by the lay Christian. (Trained theologians have always had to be familiar with their works.) The Fathers preached an all-out Christianity. They had to. In their day, to become a saint, it often sufficed to remain a Christian. A lukewarm Christian was, because of the persecutions, a contradiction in terms. Many things—including the number of martyrs in modern times remind us forcibly of the days of the early Church. Perhaps the last half of the twentieth century will even be more reminiscent. It is good to read those men, still warm from the apostolic fire. We need and are going to need, that same heat—the love of Christ Crucified.

MICHAEL DAVID

## For Those Who Want a Lay Saint

**APPRENTICE AND APOSTLE**  
By Brother Lucian, M.A.  
John S. Burns & Sons, Glasgow

This simply-written life of a French lay apostle who died at the age of twenty-three in a German concentration camp at the close of

World War II should prove of interest to all lay apostles. It will be of added interest to those who are members of the Young Christian Workers for it was through his training in this movement that his apostolic spirit was given further impetus.

On first reading, one may be left with the impression that there was nothing unusual about Marcel Callo's early years. Yet, as the threads of his life are woven, it is evident that the charity which characterized his last months in the Mauthausen concentration camp was built on the earlier "small" acts of service and sacrifice begun at home and extended to all those with whom he came in contact.

In 1943 he was ordered to work in Germany. For "his Catholic Action amongst his French companions" while at forced labor, he was finally condemned to the Mauthausen concentration camp. His life at forced labor and later in the concentration camp evidence his concern for those around him. While at forced labor, when permitted to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion, he made repeated attempts to encourage others to do so. He organized all kinds of activity to keep his fellow laborers in good spirits. While a prisoner, he tried to be a constant source of cheer to those around him. His death was a slow agony resulting from starvation, cold, beatings. From one who was with him we learn that he was "kind and gentle to the end . . . restrained and courteous . . . never uttering a word of complaint."

A startling sequel to the story of Marcel Callo lies in the fact that 50,000 Catholic men of Germany have petitioned the Cardinal Archbishop of Rennes to take such steps as are necessary to introduce the Cause of his Beatification. For those who would desire to be lay apostles, who may sometimes feel tempted to discount the small acts of service and sacrifice as unimportant, there is much to be learned from this life of a young man who made the little things count.

MARY MANNIX

## A Christian Looks at Politics

### CHRISTIAN REALISM AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS

By Reinhold Niebuhr

Scribners, \$3.00

Reinhold Niebuhr is a gifted Protestant theologian, doubtless the most influential in this country. Being mainly interested in the impact of religious thought upon all fields

of human behavior, he has often focused his reflection upon problems of political morality. The present book gathers eleven essays on such problems, some of which are here published for the first time.

The field examined ranges from communism to the doctrine of St. Augustine. Yet a common idea runs like a thread through the various chapters: Christian realism takes account of both the need for man of an authoritative social order, and the duty of man to organize the social order according to the paradox of a human nature which is sinful and redeemed at the same time. As a result, the systems which harden the social order by the nature of man into categories that escape criticism must be rejected. Niebuhr thus objects, not only to communism, but also to the "illusion of world government," to the "anomaly of European socialism," to the notion of (natural) law in Catholicism and to the theology of St. Thomas. He finds fault with St. Augustine's political realism, which he however praises more than any other; and he critically examines the main American attitudes to political issues.

Two questions may naturally be raised. Is the standard of judgment adopted sound enough to gauge everything else by it? Does the analysis do all justice to the attitudes or doctrines criticized? The first question could hardly be answered without long considerations, but on the whole Reinhold Niebuhr is a safe guide on Christian realism (except, I would add, on the points where his interpretation of Christianity is specifically Protestant).

As for the second question, the present reviewer recognizes neither Catholicism nor Thomism in the descriptions that are made of them. To give an instance, Niebuhr writes, "In Catholic mysticism (particularly early in the mysticism of St. John of the Cross) the love of God is set in complete contradiction to the love of the neighbor in such a way that the love of the creature is merely a stepladder to the love of God, which must be abandoned when the love of God (universal love) is reached" (p. 157); whereas St. John of the Cross says, "When the love and affection one feels for creatures is wholly spiritual and grounded in God, it increases, as it grows, the love of God in the soul. The more the soul thinks of her neighbor, the more also she thinks of, and desires, God. These two loves follow one another in their development" (*Avisos*, n. 184). One could hardly find a more flagrant contradiction.

It is clear that a short essay or lecture cannot envision its subject from all sides; but some topics need such a display of highlights. Catholicism or the thought of St. Thomas is of these. Even men of lesser genius than the latter fare better under an all-round examination. This is probably why the treatment of philosophers like Kierkegaard or even Marx seems slightly oversimplified.

Yet in spite of occasional slips Niebuhr's remarks are always penetrating and they are highly relevant to the present situation.

GEORGE H. TAVARD, A.A.



## Spiritual Fecundity

### FRUITS OF CONTEMPLATION

By Victorino Osende, O.P.

Herder, \$4.50

and grasp of his subject. Written by a Spanish contemplative who preaches the way of perfection as taught by St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, it is undoubtedly the distilled essence of a mind steeped in prayer. It deserves to be widely read, especially by those thirsting for sound doctrine on mysticism presented in clear, every-day language.

There is a feeling of security that nothing has been lost in the translation, that it is the fruit of a deep and perfect affinity with the spirit and concepts of the author, as if the light that illuminated the original has simply been filtered through the rapt and translucent medium of the anonymous Dominican nun who did the work. Only another translator can guess at the hours of patient and persevering labor that have gone into achieving this effect of effortlessness and spontaneity.

The book presents the facts about passive prayer in such a way as to dispel the notion that it is a recondite and esoteric practice reserved for abstruse saints or madmen. Father Osende makes it clear that all souls can dispose themselves for infused contemplation, and that this is what God wants of us. He deals skillfully with difficulties to be encountered by those who desire to grow in holiness. Ranging over an exceptionally broad spiritual terrain, he seems literally to measure the height and breadth of charity and plumb its depths. But this does not prevent him from giving meticulous care to details which are treated with minute intensity.

Underlying all the meaty and thoroughly absorbing topics is his fundamental message: that we must lift our eyes from the means of prayer to concentrate on its goal; and that only one thing is necessary—to love God as He deserves to be loved. He reiterates this theme with an earnest restraint and economy that give his message a singular compelling urgency. For he does more than present a vital doctrine of mysticism. The book itself is manifestly his *Contemplata*, the fruit of his own contemplation. There is a quiet contagion that emanates from every page; to read this book is to be lifted up, to experience a strong movement of desire to be drawn, as it were, into the sanctuary where the Author of the author is present.

ELAINE MALLEY

## Interpretation of Christ

### ONLY SON

By Walter Farrell, O.P.

Sheed & Ward, \$3.50

As many as may be the times we have read the life of Christ, *Only Son* will prove an exquisite presentation which only Father Farrell could have given us. His interpretation is marked with the authority of the Scriptures, yet tempered with the unique qualities of gentleness and tenderness that are so distinctive of his writings. The author's vision of the God-Man is one of rare depth and beauty. It is this which he shares most generously with his readers. Written in an astoundingly realistic style which we might term "3-D," it can, if we permit, project us into the events of Christ's life as to have us become quite vivid "eyewitnesses." The masterful character studies of the

people who knew Jesus so well—Mary, Joseph and His Apostles—gladly dispel whatever previous "holy card" impressions we may have had of them.

Through ten chapters he traces the patient and loving pursuit of the Savior to win the hearts of indifferent and self-centered men. In a dynamic chapter, "The Christian Challenge," he treats of the beatitudes, the "cumulative blessedness that ascends to a crescendo of heavenly harmony within the soul of a man." He explains that "the poverty mentioned here has nothing to do with lack of abundance of riches, but with a heart courageous enough to refuse to be enslaved. Meekness is no relative of weakness, but the quality of a man who holds the strongest of the passions under firm rein. The mourning are not those engulfed in self-pity, but the wise ones who weep for the abuse they and others have made of the gifts and the creatures of God. Those famished for justice are not the champions of their own rights, but men aflame with concern for others. The merciful are not the sentimental who offer the doubtful comfort of their babbling, but men rich enough in goodness and generous enough to fill the emptiness of another's misery from their own God-given abundance. The clean of heart are not the prudes, but the men whose minds live on the clean air of truth and whose affections, consequently, are strangers to the enemies of innocence. The peacemakers are not reformers sharply servant of the sins of others, but men who are masters of themselves, men whose perfectly ordered lives flood their own souls with peace in such abundance that it overflows into the lives of those about them." These are "the actions by which a man merits happiness."

Somewhere in the tenth chapter Father Farrell's work was interrupted before he could return to it death had intervened. The publishers decided to conclude this section with a factual summary and complete the book with the addition of two chapters on Our Lord's death and resurrection taken from the author's *Companion to the Summa*. However, this has resulted in too abrupt a transition from the tenor and style of the original.

KATHERINE E. WEBER

## Sociologists Discuss Marriage

### MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

by Clement S. Mihanovich,  
Gerald J. Schnepf, S.M.,  
and John L. Thomas, S.J.  
Druce, \$5.50

Ecclesiastes must have been thinking of books on marriage and family life when he said (12.12): "Of the making of books there is no end." In recent years the birthrate of these lit-

erary and not-so-literary offspring has been increasing to almost Malthusian proportions. Catholic marriage books in the technical, semi-popular and popular styles have been seeing the light with equally increasing frequency.

The present college textbook by three members of the sociology department at St. Louis University is a eugenic product of quite well-prepared progenitors. Dr. Mihanovich, a successfully married man, brings to his four chapters a wealth of experience and sociological know-how. Brother Schnepf, as an experienced teacher, writes his six chapters quite lucidly. Father John Thomas, assistant director of the Institute of Social Order,

contributes six more chapters from the abundance of his research and specialization in the field of family sociology.

As a sociological treatise in the newer vein, the text offers to college level and mature students a solid, systematic, scientific, research-guided and problem-oriented approach to the intricacies of courtship, marriage and home life. It does not displace or supplant the traditional religion course in the Catholic colleges that deal with Christian marriage in its sacramental and moral aspects. Rather, presupposing a sound religious background, the present text concentrates on the more mundane pre-marital, physical, psychological, economic, canonical, legal, socio-domestic, pathological and statistical aspects of married life.

Romanticists and social mystics who like their mystico-marital books written on the level of the *Canticle of Canticles* will not find much poetry or aesthetic imagery in this down-to-earth assessment of the hard facts of married life. It may even be somewhat of a traumatic experience for those who revel in escapist intuitionism to learn all about the Eve and Adam of today in plain language. But for better mental and spiritual health and more stable Catholic marriages, this sound sociological undergirding is just as necessary as the sound supernatural superstructure of grace and faith.

It is quite obvious that the present sociological analysis does not fully and adequately integrate the two spheres of man's activity. But it does furnish a wider comprehension of the complexity of the problems to be faced by those social theologians who do attempt the higher synthesis. Instead of remaining aloof in a world of universals and abstract ideas, the Catholic integrators can, with the aid of this handbook, come to grips with the problems of Catholic married life in the present century.

ALBERT S. FOLEY, S.J.

## Thoughts on Education

### A GUIDE FOR CATHOLIC TEACHERS

By M. T. Marnane

McMullen, \$2.50

The numerous and apt quotes from Holy Scripture and papal encyclicals, from the works of

philosophers, poets, educators, historians of ancient and modern times indicate scholarly research on the part of the author of this little classic of education. The combination of this deep knowledge with his actual experience in teaching gives weight to his words as he discusses the basic principles of Christian education and indicates how they may be applied. Always deeply conscious of the papal desire "that religion may be in very truth the foundation and crown of the youth's entire training" he examines in separate chapters the subjects of history, literature, science, the classics, music and art in order to demonstrate how readily, without an artificial force or exaggeration, each serves as a window through which divine truth gains entrance into the mind.

In the chapter "Literature and Religion" he treats of the responsibility that the school has of seeding young minds with the best thoughts from the world of books. "In order to be able to point out the best to our pupils, we ourselves must know where that best lies; and we must never cease to grow in knowledge, in taste, and in critical power. The means are everywhere; in reading the best things, in criticizing independently

and comparing with the best criticism, in forming our own views and yet keeping a willingness to modify them, in an attitude of mind that is always learning, always striving, always raising its standard." If these suggestions of the author are to be realized, then classes in religion and literature should be part of the program for all teachers and there should be a coast-to-coast battle of books among them to consider and discover which are the most profitable for their Christian cultural impact in each of the different years of school. Why doesn't every classroom have its own little library of best books, handy to both teachers and students, as a substitute for the centralized school library where are herded thousands of books which, out of sight and out of mind, have been mostly selected by the librarian who has not the time and perhaps not the capacity to choose wisely? Why isn't an hour of every school day set aside for the reading, by both teachers and taught, of these best books?

With illustrations drawn mainly from astronomy and nature study the author claims that science readily becomes an instrument for gaining deeper knowledge, and hence a deeper love of God." The nature study should include the care of gardens so that youth would be brought "directly in touch with beautiful and wonderful things" and thus be led to an appreciation of the Source of all beauty and wonder. For astronomy students have "the laboratory of the heavens and will study therein with more keenness and interest than amidst test tubes and beakers." However it is not astronomy and nature study but the science of test tubes and beakers and dissection which is receiving in reality the emphasis on the higher levels of learning and its study requires so much time that none is left for star gazing and gardening.

Even the other subjects which he has chosen for consideration and which he shows to be very capable of developing a sound Christian philosophy, will succeed as tools for that purpose only when the wielders possess intellectual and moral qualifications required by their importance; cherish a pure and holy love for the youths confided to them because they love Jesus Christ and His Church." Marnane devotes an excellent chapter to this quote from the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* dealing on the three paramount needs of scholarship, schoolmastership, and influence, and stressing the fact that "the greatest of these is influence. The whole man teaches, and not merely his method, his knowledge, or any other separable part of him. . . . This influence will fix religion in its central place, it will have depth and permanence when it flows from a life lived with Christ and in Christ."

SISTER M. DULCIDA, S.S.N.D.

### "Science Knows All"?

MAN AND MATTER  
by F. Sherwood Taylor  
McMullen, \$3.50

Dr. F. Sherwood Taylor, Director of the English Science Museum, is one of the great science teachers of our time. *Man and Matter* contains his reflections on the supposed opposition between religion and science. Dr. Taylor discusses the inability of science to present a complete understanding of reality due to limitations inherent in its approach. Religion is concerned with spiritual truths, science with material (space, time, and mass). Conflict arises only when one or the other draws conclusions in the other's field



from its own postulates. He applies this in a precise discussion of the value of the theory of evolution.

He continues with a further discussion of the limits of the material scientific treatment of reality in his chapter "On the Excellence of Things," the best chapter in the book. He turns to the positive benefits of science and problems raised by it in the following four chapters, expressing his hopes for man's welfare to come from future technological development. He concludes with a brief examination of the natural phenomena of mysticism, and an excellent chapter on the responsibilities of the laity in the defense of the Church.

His basic principles are the standard Catholic teaching on the subject. The special merit lies in the way he applies his broad scientific and religious knowledge to the problem. The book will be especially enlightening to anyone who presumes that science "knows all."

HUGH FALLON

## A Book to Read Again

**A SPIRITUAL READER**  
Compiled by Francis Edw. Nugent  
Newman, \$3.50

Serious, thoughtful Christians of all ages and denominations are sure to agree that in this Year of Our Lord it is necessary to remind ourselves constantly

of eternal verities in order to keep alive the faith that is in us—the treasure we possess through God's goodness. To advance spiritually we have to work at it and for this spiritual reading is a "must."

*A Spiritual Reader* is an excellent book for lay Catholics and religious as well. Lay Catholics, having to be ready always to defend their faith against misunderstanding and ignorance as well as deliberate attack, can read this book with great profit and find their interior lives enriched. Twenty-one of the best spiritual writers of this century are represented in these twenty-five chapters and Mr. Nugent should be commended for doing the spadework that was necessary to make these writings available between the covers of one book. The Introduction "Seeking Christ in Reading" by M. Eugene Boylan, O. Cist. R. from *This Tremendous Love* cannot be praised too highly. The author sets forth the "how" and "why" of spiritual reading. He penetrates the times, shows clearly the danger that surges 'round about us and with him we see the crying need for something to counteract its insidious infection. Leo J. Trese's chapter "The Mystical Body" from *Many Are One* I found especially helpful, because I have sometimes been troubled that I did not have a deeper appreciation of the meaning of the Mystical Body. I understand a little better now and I am not ashamed that it is still a mystery. In "A Eucharistic Interior Life: The Only Hope of Apostolic Success" Jean-Baptiste Chautard, O.C.S.O. gives advice to the lay apostolate and clergy and in impassioned language lays bare the cause of failure. It is a short, fiery chapter at the end of the book, followed by a chapter from *The Living Mass* by F. Desplanques, S.M., which begins with "Go, the Mass is finished," followed by thoughts that carry away with us, stream of consciousness style . . . that the Mass never ended. "Thus . . . I fill up in the same way, what Thou didst begin . . . Thy Sacrifice. The duties of my state of life become adoration. On this page that I am writing . . ." and we close the book looking inward, searching our souls, looking outward, so much to be done . . . the sword gleaming, breastplate adjusted, buckling on the armor of God. There

ardly a fault to be found with this book unless it be the liberty Gerald  
ann, O.P., has taken in adding trimmings to the Lord's Prayer. It is a  
book to have handy, to reread, to digest.

MARION KENNEALLY

## The Venerable Libermann

STAR OF JACOB  
By Helen Walker Homan  
McKay, \$3.75

The Venerable Francis Libermann may soon become the first canonized saint—at least well-known one—of Jewish origin, since the days of Peter, Paul, and the apostles. The son of a strict Orthodox Rabbi, and trained, himself, from his earliest years for that vocation, Libermann entered the Church in the midst of a cloudburst of grace that swept most of his brothers in with him.

Almost immediately he felt himself called to the priesthood. A brilliant and beloved seminarian, he was struck by the mysterious hand of God on the eve—literally the eve—of Major Orders. He suffered an epileptic stroke. For ten years God humbled him with repeated attacks. He did odd jobs at the seminary, ran errands, etc. At the age of 39 his strange "novitiate" was over. The Holy Spirit was now satisfied. His soul had been stretched; now he could love millions. The errand boy was raised to the priesthood, and more-or-less "drafted" to found a new missionary congregation, now known as the Holy Ghost Fathers. Millions of African Christians have received the grace of the faith through the ministry of his sons. The Ven. Libermann has become famous also as one of the leading spiritual writers of the nineteenth century.

What to say of Miss Homan's book? My job as a reviewer is either simplified or complicated, I'm not sure which, by the fact that I also happen to be a Jewish convert. In the first place, let me say that the book is obviously a labor of love on the author's part. It is warmly and sincerely written. It was meant for popular consumption—and that's not a fault; so was the New Testament.

Nevertheless, as in the majority of saint's biographies, *Star of Jacob* lays undue emphasis on extraordinary but accidental phenomena. I mean the visions, prophetic dreams, and the like, which the saints sometimes experience. These they may have in virtue of their sanctity, but it is certainly not in virtue of *them* that they possess sanctity. Since the Little Power, this critique is "old stuff." But then why do saint's biographies continue to be written in the same vein?

One fact which has come to my attention, and which impresses me, is that some working people who read this book—people who do not have too much time for spiritual reading—read it from cover to cover and were absorbed by it. Perhaps that is one of the reasons the good God has for sending His saints visions. I mean that. In any case I am grateful to Miss Homan for interesting American Catholics in the Ven. Libermann.

It is only natural, if not supernatural, that it should come as a shock to some traditionally Catholic circles to hear of an ex-rabinnical student who founded a congregation within the Holy Roman Catholic Church. It is good that they should hear of it, especially in the English-speaking world where the majority of Jews now live. Let the shock pass away. It is good for all to know that in our times the Jews are more and more

becoming aware of Christ. They are not now isolated by ghetto conditions and their ignorance is less and less invincible ignorance. Their responsibility increases. So does the responsibility of Catholics to them. The more it is made clear to them (as it was made clear to me) that they are wanted, and that there is a place for them in the Church which is Catholic, the more conversions there will be. I speak only of individual conversions, not mass conversion. For in the case of the Jews, mass conversion remains part of God's inscrutable providence. Not the certainty of it (for that was revealed to St. Paul), but its date.

I don't want to forget to mention that this book may not be the best book at all to give to interested Jews. That may sound strange after what I've just said, but I think there are parts in it that may offend sensitive souls. For example: young Libermann is instructed by his teacher that it is no sin to make an unjust money transaction with a gentile. A few things like that could perhaps better have gone unwritten, as far as reaching a Jewish audience is concerned. Miss Homan makes it clear that this was not the universal practice of the Jews, when she has Libermann's father, the Rabbi of Saverne, take objection to his teacher's moral theology. Nevertheless, I know that this will tread on toes made very sensitive since Hitler's Stormtroopers have marched over them.

MICHAEL DAVID

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## Praying the Gospels

By

**Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.**

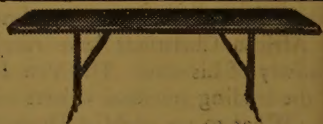
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